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Reggio Emilia's Philosophy Approach; Environment as a Third Teacher in Child Potential Development in ECCE Institutions

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Abstract

The potential possessed by the child is also influenced by the environment. Children who have the potential have a greater chance of success if they are in the right environment. Reggio Emilia's approach is an educational approach that facilitates the environment for children who have potential. Ward was the third teacher in the principle of Reggio Emilia. This study aims to describe the various environmental arrangements developed by teachers using the Reggio Emilia Approach (REA). The study was conducted at Kensington International Kindergarten located in Bangkok City, Thailand with a field trip method in 2018. The data collection procedure used in this study is observation and documentation. In this study, researchers documented activities that implemented REA at Kengsinton International Kingdergarten. Therefore, it is hoped that teachers at ECCE Institutions in Indonesia will use Reggio Emilia's approach to be creative and innovative in learning activities. The need for comprehensive teacher training, for example a strategy for structuring the environment for children's activities.

Keywords: *Environmental; Reggio Emilia; Potential; ECCE Institutions*

Introduction

Reggio Emilia's approach is an educational approach that facilitates the environment for children who have potentials. Reggio Emilia's approach emphasizes socio-constructivists where the child is seen as an active learner, seeing the child as a unique person who not only has different desires and interests, but also has different interactions with friends, adults and their environment (Birinci, 2018; Cline & Vau, 2019). In constructivist social philosophy, adults and children are colleagues who jointly construct and structure their knowledge through their experiences and interactions with others and with the environment (Dodd-Nufrio, 2011; Harris, 2018; Mitchiner, et al, 2018). Thus, this Reggio Emilia-based approach provides opportunities for all children to develop their potential.

Potential is a gift that not all children have. Potential refers to excellence in a field that requires visual-spatial skills or practical abilities such as those required in sports, drama or art (Reis, S.M., & Renzulli, 2010). Potential can be developed more optimally if it can be identified from an early age. Early childhood is a golden age that can be facilitated to detect children's potential. Cagliari, et al, (2016) expressed the importance of trusting the potential of each child in Reggio Emilia's approach. Thus, the

following studies prove that Reggio Emilia's proximity has been shown to be an effective approach to the development of preschool-age children (Brown, 2015; Oztürk, 2016; Parker, Keily, Atchison, 2019; Thompson, 2018) and learning programs in preschool education (Lipsey et asl, 2015; Parker, et al, 2019).

Reggio Emilia's approach places great emphasis on the rights and abilities of the child (Hans, 2019; Hong et al, 2017). Loris Malaguzzi's philosophy of the child and the process of the child in acquiring knowledge is very strong as seen in the slogan "*Hundred Language of Children*". Malaguzzi (1998) states that children are 'rich in potential, strong, strong, and competent. Loris Malaguzzi revealed that children are born rich, regardless of cultural background, wherever children live to become stronger, more capable, more talented than ever imagined.

The picture of the child is considered a strong, competent, creative, curious, potential filled and ambitious entity (Malaguzzi, 1998a). Children who are born with hundreds of languages and the learning process is actually interacting with each other between languages. Another study says a child will have many ways to know who he is and express it at the right moment in the learning environment has been provided. For example, the child expresses himself by painting and expressing his emotions while playing. Therefore, it is necessary to play the role of educators and programs to create many ways of expression in accordance with the environment and culture where children live (Inan, 2012). One hundred children's languages in Reggio Emilia's approach that children have many mediums for expressing themselves, including visual, musical, artistic, and other fashions (Edwards et al, 2012). Malaguzzi's concept of a hundred children's languages is in line with the concept of multiple intelligences of Gardner (1997).

In learning Reggio Emilia considers the golden age of children as competent learners who deserve every opportunity to develop their potential (Hall et al., 2014). In Reggio Emilia's philosophy the language that children have is not what it is generally, namely spoken, written and bodily language. Children's language or the way the child communicates can be through stories, poetry, singing, writing, drawing, painting, sculpture, crafts, musical arts, role art, dance art, and still open to other types of languages. Loris Malaguzzi wrote his poem in 1993 (Mitchiner et al, 2018) with the title "*No Way. The Hundreds There*". This poem says that children are created with hundreds of languages, hundreds of hands, hundreds of thoughts, hundreds of ways of thinking, hundreds of ways of speaking, hundreds of ways of playing, hundreds of ways of listening, hundreds of worlds (to discover, create and dream of), hundreds of languages and hundreds of hundreds of others.

Loris Malaguzzi is inspired by several educators and philosophers such as Piaget, Vygotsky, Gardner, and Dewey, Bruner which will be described as follows: (1) Loris Malaguzzi was inspired by Piaget's idea that emphasizes "active learning" where the child actively interacts with his environment to acquire knowledge facilitated by adults (Boyd & Bath, 2017), nevertheless in Reggio Emilia's Approach the knowledge is not acquired in the form of an "isolated" environment but rather through a social environment (Mitchiner et al, 2018), and Loris Malaguzzi also rejected Piaget's theory of cognitive stages because it was considered too restrictive of child development and limited teacher-to-child thinking and exploration (Edwards, 2003); (2) In terms of the way the child acquires knowledge, Loris Malaguzzi is influenced by Vygotsky that is, the child gains knowledge through active learning that "interacts with his environment". Loris Malaguzzi describes the child as a social figure from birth, has a lot of intelligence, curiosity and questions (Edwards, 2003; Cline et al., 2012). The theory of "Scaffolding" explains that teachers are models, facilitators and observers of children because they are independent learners and the theory of "Zone of Proximal Development" which says that learning is composed of what the child already knows plus facilities from the teacher and cooperation with peers. This philosophy is very clearly visible in the educational practice of Reggio Emilia's approach (Mitchiner et al, 2018); (3) In the application of the learning program Malaguzzi mentioned that he was inspired by Bruner. Bruner emphasized the need for educators to ask questions to children and the process of scaffolding in the learning process (Harris, 2018; Cline et al., 2012); (4) In terms of treating and giving opportunities to

children, Malaguzzi uses Howard Gardner's theory of "Multiple Intelligences". Teachers in the city of Reggio Emilia should use this view whenever interacting with children so that the "Hundred Languages of Children" can be realized (Harris, 2018); (5) Dewey said that children are architects for their own learning. According to Dewey, play is in great demand by children, because through play children express their experiences and understanding of the world. Dewey believes children can learn through play and find meaning in their experiences when given the opportunity to be involved in the process. In the learning process, Reggio Emilia's approach uses project-based learning which is an application of Dewey principles (Harris, 2018; Dodd-Nufrio, 2011). In addition, Reggio Emilia's approach is the basic basis of inquiry-based learning methods that support the development of children's critical and creative thinking (Latta et al, 2017).

The Reggio Emilia-based educational concept places children as individuals who have different potentials from each other and are facilitated to develop their potential optimally. In addition, schools can facilitate by providing special differentiation programs for talented children (Kahveci & Akgul, 2014). Non-challenging instructions not only affect the child's academic development or potential, they also affect the child's social and emotional development (Eddles-Hirsch et al, 2010). For example, spatially talented children have the capacity to succeed but are too often overlooked by educational services. Talented children experience greater academic struggles than other gifted children, including behavioral problems and lack of academic engagement (Lakin & Wai, 2020). With differentiation programs through enrichment activities designed by the school, children's potential will feel challenged to go through it and be able to develop that potential.

Reggio Emilia's approach emphasizes socio-constructivists where the child is seen as an active learner, seeing the child as a unique person, who not only has different desires and interests, but also has different interactions with friends, adults and their environment (Birinci, 2018; Cline et al, 2019). The REA approach is committed to "creating learning conditions that will encourage and facilitate the child to build his own thinking power through the incorporation of his entire expressive, communicative, and cognitive language (Hewett, 2001; Vecchi, 2010). Reggio Emilia's approach to early childhood education is committed to creating an environment for learning that will improve children's critical thinking through expression, communication, language, and cognitive *(through the synthesis of all the expressive, communicative and cognitive languages)* (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 2012). The environment is the third teacher who gives the child the opportunity to build social and life understanding, giving the child experience as part of a natural society. The environment as the third teacher is an environment that is prepared so that children are actively involved in learning, and the environment is very beautifully arranged so that it makes parents and visitors feel comfortable and can encourage taking time to be at school in order to find information about children and schools. The assumption that the environment is the third teacher shows that knowledge can be built in a social environment, so that the environment is designed to provide opportunities for children who are involved in learning and can interact to build knowledge together.

Reggio Emilia's way of solving a high-quality environment is to consider the environment as a third teacher. Reggio Emilia's approach implies a socio-constructivist model that views knowledge as a construct through interaction with humans and the environment (Dodd Nufrio, 2011). Schools inspired by Reggio Emilia approach view the physical environment as very important because it reveals many things how children are noticed the rewards given in the teaching and learning process (New, 1998).

Childhood is often a time to see and use the environment imaginatively. Fraser (2006) in his work has identified Reggio Emilia eight principles as the key to the environment as the third teacher of the other as follows: (1) aesthetics; (2) transparency; (3) active learning; (4) flexibility; (5) collaboration; (6) reciprocity; (7) bringing the outdoors; (8) relationships. Based on the eight principles of Reggio Emilia above shows the child using and understanding space in an unplanned way, known as *Rasmussen's* idea of "the children's environment. For example, the principle of aesthetics and transparency, children are

interested and curious about anything that involves their senses. Meanwhile, the flexibility of articulating children using objects in the game. Active learning through experimenting and manipulating objects in the outdoors to stimulate the child's curiosity about nature and the child's social environment.

Reggio Emilia's closeness to the role of the environment in teaching and learning draws deeply about how children use space to create meaning (Tarr, 2001). From the child's point of view small changes such as preserving the environment become part of a planned approach in the curriculum and evaluation called the "negotiated curriculum." (Jacobs, 1961). The negotiated curriculum is also called *Emergent curriculum* (Jones & Nimmo, 1995), teachers are involved in designing, documentation, and learning activities (Frye, 2002). The teacher listens carefully to the children's conversations and then documents the learning activities using devices such as recorders, sketches, tape-recordings, video recordings, and photos, thus creating a visible trace of the learning process. The teacher also reflects and discusses with the child to plan the next activity to deepen the child's interest and potential.

Reggio Emilia's approach interprets knowledge not only in the form of an "isolated" environment but through a social environment (Mitchiner et al, 2018). Thus, every child has the right to gain knowledge according to their respective abilities and potentials. The moral of the teacher as an educator values all children by equipping various competencies (Roberts Holmes, 2017). Talent is an ability that enables or facilitates future achievements (Meyer, 2020). A child is said to have the potential to develop certain abilities then it is easy for the child to develop his abilities. If a child has potential then realistically the child can develop the abilities he has within a certain period of time with existing resources. Both internal and external resources.

The environment is very influential on children who have potential. Half of the talented children identified as under achieve because they thought their classes were too easy and boring (Reis & Renzulli, 2010). Reggio Emilia's approach maintains a "balance" between the provision of facilities and the free exploration of children (Tarini & White, 1998; Cadwell, 2003) describing the environment as a learning center, children put blocks on the floor or empty containers that were on the table. On the lower shelf of the child can find "transparent jars of shells, buttons, beads, wires, small pine cones, dried rose metal, flower-shaped beads, playdough, stones from the shore, wood carving puzzles and spiral shavings from colored pencils, all of which give rise to light and reveal their interesting contents. As is known, the environment in schools that use Reggio Emilia's proximity has an important role. Experts believe that the environment is the third teacher who can support the learning process. So the school environment is beautifully arranged, cover plants, considering the direction of light, "inviting" the learning process with the aim of inviting everyone to "get involved" in the process (Mcnally & Slutsky, 2016; Cutcher, 2013; Roberts Holmes, 2017). a procedure known as expert judgment (Lange, 2017).

This study aims to find out and explore the philosophy of Reggio Emilia approach to the environment as the third teacher in Early Childhood Education. At the end of this study, it is hoped that the environment in Reggio Emilia's approach can develop the potential of early childhood through activities at ECCE Institutions.

Methods

This research is a qualitative descriptive with a field visit method that discusses the environment as the third teacher in developing children's potential through the Reggio Emilia approach. The study was conducted from July to August 2018 at Kengsinton International Kingdergarten located on 88 Thanon Bang Phrom street, Khwaeng Bang Phrom, Khet Taling Chan, Krung Thep Maha Nakhon 10170, Thailand. With an area of 2270.0 m^2 and has a planned architecture.

Data analysis techniques in this study used descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis is used to analyze environmental structuring data in various activity centers using the Reggio Emilia approach.

Finding

Mission Kensington International Kindergarten is to create a positive learning environment, where children, parents and teachers work together to find *(our aim is to create a positive environment for learning, where children, parents and teachers will join together on a journey of discovery).* Kensington International Kindergarten offers a pre-school and kindergarten curriculum in Bangkok based on the Early Years Foundation Stage and the British National Curriculum and is committed to providing excellence in Early Childhood Education. Every single child in our care will enjoy a warm, safe, stimulating, individual and age appropriated education that will prove to be a critical foundation in their life-time love of learning, development and vital confidence building. At Kensington, we take a long-term perspective and see our children as future adults and leaders. The Kensington kindergarten has everything needed for successful, well-rounded children.

The learning process is carried out in accordance with the interests and talents of children by using pedagogical approaches, one of which is the approach of Reggio Emilia, Montessori and Te Whakiri, an approach that continues to be at the forefront of research-based curricula around the world and has a positive effect on child development so that it receives international praise. In this study, researchers made observations in July to August 2018. The purpose of this study is to find out the environment as the third teacher in developing children's potential through Reggio Emilia approach. To gain a deep understanding of the structuring of the environment that helps the child learn.

Classroom settings built on child-centered learning, In classrooms for art activities are found guitars, percussion instruments such as egg beaters, tambourine, bells, xylophones, and more. In connection with instruments the child learns about patterns and movements through sounds, trains fine motor skills, cooperates with friends, waits for his turn, and cultivates patience. A game project with musical instruments, the teacher invites the child to make noise using a stick, rubber band guitar, bottle shaker and nuts. Learning through instruments stimulates full sensory activity towards touch, visual, and hearing. In addition, the art activity classroom also provides art materials such as watercolors, clay, chalk, brushes, balls, cotton, sponges, grains and charcoal for children to experiment in the classroom. Through the power of inquiry the child learns about the world with art. Reggio Emilia's approach of using art in his learning is in harmony with the theory of communicating with the child. For more details on painting activities in the art classroom, you can see the picture below.

Figure 1. Painting Activities in Art Area

Furthermore, there is a math and science area, children can practice the concept of measurement, a lot of a little bit, weight (scales) and so on. For more details, you can see the image below.

Figure 2. a Lot of a Little Bit Concepts in the Math and Science Area

Here, there is an outdoor area, children play using small rocks, soil, and leaves. the child observes fallen leaves, grass thrives on moist soil, grains of sand and so on. Seeing the outdoors will trigger all kinds of curious questions in children, leading to the learning and appreciation of life and its cycles and stimulation all the children's senses. For more details, you can see the image below.

Figure 3. Play activities in the Outdoors

Furthermore, there are areas for cycling, reading books, resting and so on. Long-term projects are one of the characteristics of Reggio Emilia's approach, because this approach focuses on assessing and paying attention to the child with all the potential he has, the child can reformulate, think critically, carry out his ideas, and work on daily projects (Mitchell, 2009; Santn & Torruella, 2017). Therefore, the arrangement of the classroom environment at REA is supported by several activities including cycling, reading books, resting and so on. As shown in the image below.

Figure 4. Cycling Area, Reading Books, Resting

Next, there is a drama play area to stimulate all the child's senses and practice communication skills. For more details, you can see the image below.

Figure 5. Drama Play Area

Discussion

Reggio Emilia's approach adopted the philosophies of thought of Howard Gardner, John Dewey, and Lev Vygotsky. The similarity of Reggio Emilia's approach with Vygotsky's theory is that there is parental or adult attention in the education of their child, parents have a role to organize learning activities for the child and stimulate the development of the child (Freeman, 2011). Reggio Emilia's approach agrees with John Dewey's thoughts on democracy ,social, education and aesthetics in ECCE (Lindsay, 2015). Loris Malaguzzi believes that children have 100 languages and expressive styles to convey what they think (Abramson et al, 1995; Freeman, 2011). Reggio Emilia views that children need the freedom to explore and experiment so that they can develop their intellectually. Teacher Reggio Emilia believes that learning activities should be flexible that connects things that exist in the past, present and future and considers the child to be a being who has various ideas and is competent (Freeman, 2011; Martin & Evaldsson, 2012) according to preschool teachers in Italy is as a process of thinking, socializing, proving theories, experimenting, imagining (Freeman, 2011; Mcnally, S. A., & Slutsky, 2016).

The early years of a child's life are a period of rapid growth and development (Arseven, 2014), and the positive experiences a child has from an early age become his foundation for lifelong learning, behavior, health, and well-being (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). It has been well documented that a positive and quality environment supports the child's learning activities and his holistic development (Hewes, 2006; Makin, 2003; Shipley, 2008; Sylva et al, 2006; Shenk, 2010) supports the idea of a high-quality learning environment and explains that "children develop according to environmental conditions. In the Kindergarten Program, Gandini (1998) which emphasizes Reggio's perspective on the environment as the third teacher in the classroom, between the adult and the child in the room (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016)

Reggio Emilia's school setting is famous for its rich environment that encourages learner learning because both are aesthetically and intellectually stimulating and also reflect respect for the rights, interests, and needs of individuals who use space (New, 1998). The uniqueness of Reggio's learning environment is how classes are created together between learners and educators. This collaborative relationship consists of a mutual exchange between children and adults about the appropriate adjustments that can be made to ensure optimal growth and learning in a classroom setting (Hewett, 2001). In conversation with Gandini & Malaguzzi (2011), Loris Malaguzzi compares the relationship between the teacher and the child in the game of ping pong. Loris explained that both players must contribute to the game to get optimal growth and learning progress. Otherwise, one player will not be able to participate (Gandini & Malaguzzi, 2011).

In Reggio Emilia, the environment is the third teacher and it is believed that the space that teachers create for children has a strong influence on what is valued in the future (Fraser, 2012). Callaghan (2013) referring to the child as a capable communicator, collaborator, capable of empathy, imagination, sensitivity, and joy. Therefore, the class should reflect this hals through learning that invites children to communicate ideas in many ways. Samuelsson & Carlsson (2008) explains that in Reggio's approach, play is integrated as one of the dimensions of learning.

The environment also includes an atelier, a studio where children are free to explore a wide variety of tools, materials and perform various art activities such as using paint, clay, light, projectors, musical instruments, and others. This environment is a fertile environment in developing the child's creativity. Children are free to explore and use a wide variety of tools and materials to create works of art. Collaboration theory says that art is a strong medium for collaboration, so Atelier actually supports collaboration skills in children. In addition to the atelier, the remida is also one of the special places for Reggio Emilia's Approach. Remida, an open material storage area that is donated by 200 companies in the city of Reggio Emilia.

Learning in the Reggio Emilia Approach is progettazione (project-based learning). Project-based learning is integrated learning, not separate and divided into several subjects that make the child's mind become compartmentalized, narrow and stand each other. Afifah et al., (2019) explaining the results of her research that project learning inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach affects children's creative thinking ability and is driven by children's curiosity, and doing projects effectively helps children express creativity and provide support for children's creative thinking skills. Project-based learning opens up wide opportunities for hundreds of children's languages. The project shows the community that every child has a unique way of acquiring their knowledge (Cline et al., 2012). This is also supported by project-based learning that is not limited in time, a project can last for one month or up to three months according to the child's interest. Thus, the benefits of project-based learning are to be a confident, independent, responsible learner, monitor one's own work, discipline (Bell, 2010) arouses curiosity, is critical in thinking for taking over his work, increases creativity because it hones the ability to find and solve problems, collaborate and communicate with his fellow friends (Weber, 2019). All these are necessary capabilities in the 21st century.

In line with the description above, research Adu & Kissiedu (2016) explained that the majority of early childhood in the early years express themselves through art because children do not yet have the ability to communicate through vocabulary and written words. Therefore, teachers need to provide many art-based activities to meet the needs of the child. Reggio Emilia Approach principle according to (Harris, 2018; Cline et al., 2012) explained as follows: (1) Emergent Curriculum. Built on the interests of children. Topics used in learning activities can be obtained through conversations with children; (2) Project Works. A thorough and in-depth concept of ideas and interests within the group. Projects become the backbone of children's and teachers' learning activities and are carried out as adventures; (3) Representational Development. Learning in Reggio Emilia integrates graphic arts to accommodate cognitive abilities, linguistics, and social development; (4) Cooperation/Collaboration. In this approach, cooperation or collaboration between the school and home communities is also strongly emphasized to support children's learning activities at school; (5) Teachers as Researchers. The role of the teacher is to be a true learner with children.

Conclusion

The results of the study concluded that early childhood learning activities require activities to attract children's attention to explore, think creatively and think critically from an early age. When the child feels happy, the child will be easier to interpret, understand and be interested in exploring new things.

It is hoped that teachers will be inspired in innovating learning using REA in Indonesia. The need for overall teacher training related to strategies for structuring the environment of children's activities. The limitation in this research is that the researcher uses a questionnaire as a tool for measuring research variables, researchers, so that the conclusions drawn are only based on the data collected through the use of written instruments. Research is only carried out on a narrow / less broad scope so that the results obtained are still not optimal. Thus, for future researchers in order to further expand the scope of research, so that research results are able to provide a better generalizability.

Researchers consider that this manuscript will help teachers in cultivate children's talents from an early age with correct and wise stimulation, increasing knowledge about creative and innovative teaching practice competence. Therefore, the authors recognize the need to improve data collection on teaching staff and scientists from research centers, using validated and reliable questionnaires in developing children's talents.

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